

Building Queer Utopia

A Framework for Collectivity & Creativity



a research-creation project & zine by maya chorney
featuring art & ideas by collaborators



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To learn more about this project, get a free digital zine with image descriptions, or get in touch for anything else, email mayachorney@hotmail.com or add me on Instagram @the_official_papaya

A Note on Justice

This project was created on the unceded, unsurrendered lands of the Anishinaabe Algonquin, whose presence here reaches back to time immemorial and continues to this day.

Utopian endeavours must honour the voices, knowledge systems, and sovereignty of Indigenous peoples. If we don't work for the liberation of all, and especially those most impacted by the oppressive systems we resist, how can we name our movements or spaces as utopian?

Many of my collaborators echoed this sentiment during our conversations. As one artist noted, "progress is only progress for those who can afford it." To achieve justice and liberation, we must collectively resist the intertwining systems that hurt each of us: "systemic racism, oppression, capitalism, colonialism, the cis het patriarchy." We must also recognize how this land's first inhabitants are uniquely impacted by such systems and support their crucial work for environmental and social justice, which are mutually constitutive.

Words of Gratitude

This project exists in a complex, vibrant web of actors (including people living and dead, familiar and unknown to me but through their artistic or scholarly work).

I'm honoured that 13 of my peers trusted me with their ideas, feelings, art, and stories. Thank you - I had so much fun exploring/creating together! An extra thanks to Gabbie for helping with workshop space and Kiran for lending their ear.

Thank you to Professor Sarah Brouillette for guiding me as my academic supervisor. I'm also grateful to Carleton U for funding my work through I-CUREUS.

Most importantly, thank you to my mom, without whom I would not be able to dream of or articulate utopia at all.

Introduction

As my relationship with queerness deepens, so does my desire to participate in and build community spaces. This project emerges from that desire, as well as my literary and gender studies and the social webs I exist in. Queer theory and other media equipped me with the necessary tools for this work. José Esteban Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia*—excerpts of which became part of my collage for this zine's cover—is of note in this regard. This seminal text was a crucial starting point for thinking through utopia.

However, my main goal with this project was to move past theory. My central focus was thus on conversation and creation with my peers. Thirteen student artists and recent grads from Carleton University became my collaborators on this project. Because I wanted this project to act as a practical foundation for my future creative and socio-political initiatives, I sought participants who were part of my extended social network. Some were friends, others mutual acquaintances. All were people as interested in community organizing through the arts as I am.

Engaging in one-on-one conversations with my collaborators, I admired their socio-political and self-awareness, intelligence, and ability to articulate their desires for the future. Speaking with fellow queer students and artists about identity, community, and utopia also expanded my own understanding of these issues.

My collaborators come from different educational, artistic, and socio-political backgrounds. Many have multi-disciplinary creative interests and practices. This diversity is reflected throughout the zine, as are the common threads that ran through our interactions. As they shared their dreams with me for more desirable futures, I identified recurring themes in their responses—primarily, the importance of and desire for respect, safety, access, and community care on all levels.

Once I had built a rapport with everybody in this way, we moved on to the creation phase. I had been maintaining a personal creative practice throughout my project. For instance, I wrote the following limerick to poke fun at my oft-challenging encounters with complex theory: “I’ve been reading up on queer theory/ but I’m only left with more queries./ Ten commas per line,/ countless words to define—/ utopia’s making me weary.”

However, I was particularly excited to make art in a group dynamic utilizing the knowledge I obtained through primary and secondary research. I hosted the same workshop twice, once online and once on campus. For those interested, I have included the guide I created to facilitate this event further in the zine. The end result of the workshop was not only the art you now see in this document but also (at least for me, and I hope for my collaborators) a strengthened sense of community belonging.

Muñoz claims that “queerness is not yet here” (1). But although this world isn’t utopic or queer in many aspects, this doesn’t mean we can’t make pockets of utopia in the here and now, if only fleetingly. I believe queer people *are* actively fostering such spaces within their intimate social circles and beyond.

A critical or queer utopia is a space where we can dream radically different potentialities than those dictated to us by the myriad oppressions of daily life. Beyond glimpsing alternative futures, queer collective spaces such as hybrid art-social events give us room to centre desire, joy, curiosity, and experimentation. We might view such spaces as temporary autonomous zones. These are “liberated area[s] ‘of land, time or imagination’ where one can be for something, not just against, and where new ways of being human together can be explored and experimented with” (“T.A.Z.”, beautifultrouble.org). Let’s create together!

- maya chorney

Workshop Guide

For those interested in the workshops that led to much of this art, read on! You may use this guide for your personal or (free) community-building practices. Please credit me if you do so.

Topic || Queering the Future

Description || What does it mean to be queer? How can we queer our creative and community spaces? In this workshop, we'll explore art as a site for imagining queer futures. We'll move through a series of short exercises with discussion in between, concluding with a period of free creation and sharing. Although this workshop involves writing prompts, it also offers plenty of room to incorporate additional artistic mediums. Writing, drawing, painting, and collage materials supplied.

Introductions || Although I have a rapport with everyone in the room, others are meeting for the first time. I ask people to introduce themselves as I organize the craft table. They decide to share names, pronouns, and what one person jokingly terms “pseudo” fun facts. I finish the round of introductions with...

Opening Remarks || I remind my peers that they don't need to disclose any information they do not wish to. I request that we honour each other's privacy by not sharing any identifying information of fellow attendees with anyone not in the room. If anyone needs to discuss something later with a trusted person, I ask that they omit identifying or overly personal information.

Art and conversation may stir up feelings, so I ask that we exercise care when discussing potentially sensitive topics. We come to this space with different backgrounds and experiences. Honouring these differences includes being mindful of other people's preferences for language surrounding identity.

Although I forgot to include this, I encourage facilitators to say that “if someone doesn’t share pronouns, we should assume this is intentional.” This statement creates room for folks to share their pronouns if they wish to while mitigating discomfort for people questioning their gender identity or expression.

Next, I invite everyone to occupy the workshop space however feels best, communicate needs as they arise, and take breaks. The space features moveable furniture and a sitting area if one needs a break from the main conversation/crafting table.

The focus of this workshop is on community building and creative expression rather than technical ability. To foster a welcoming sharing environment, I ask that we avoid giving constructive criticism unless someone requests feedback. This space is non-hierarchical and collaborative. I invite everyone to learn from and treat each other with generosity and respect.

Workshop Foundations || To get us thinking about queerness and the future, I ask everyone to read a sentence from the introduction of *Cruising Utopia* aloud before passing the book to the next person around the table.

Writing Prompts || Next, we do a spiralling exercise adapted from Lynda Barry’s *Syllabus: Notes from an Accidental Professor*:

1. Divide a page in two. Draw a dot in the top half’s centre.
2. Begin creating a spiral around the dot. As you draw, listen carefully to a song or poem. I read “I met a time-traveller...” aloud to the group (you can find the poem later in this zine).
3. On the bottom of the page, write a list of 5 things that come to mind about your relationship to queerness and the future.

We then move through a series of prompts that build on each other. The goal is to write what feels true, not to get caught up in overthinking things. What anyone writes is only for them, but all are invited to share observations after the final prompt.

1. Think about the last week. Was there a time during this period when you felt content? How about frustrated? What comes to mind? How did those moments feel—physically, emotionally, or on any other level? What did you desire?
2. Now, turn to the past. Write about something that makes you nostalgic. It can be a first-hand experience or a cultural memory. What, specifically, do you desire about that thing?
3. Finally, think ahead to the future. It can be decades or days from now. What do you most desire for that future? It can be something small and simple, or an overarching change.
4. Identify any threads that connect your previous responses, circle things that stand out, and jot down any themes you notice. How do your experiences inform your desires?

Free Creation Period || With the foundation of our previous work set, we spend the remaining workshop time developing our ideas into coherent art pieces. You'll notice that some of my collaborators incorporate physical fragments of the spiralling and writing exercises into their artwork. For example, see both the collage facing this page and the centrefold.



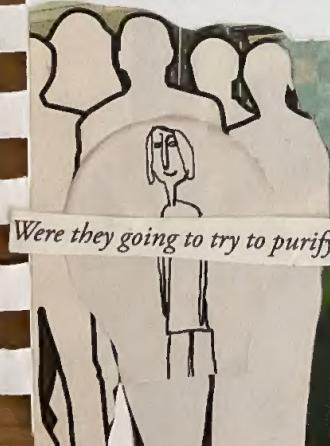
(On the right) Untitled Collage by Maya Meloche

Maya is currently completing a major in Film Studies with a minor in English. If she isn't spending time with her cat, they're probably watching a movie, or watching a movie with their cat. Maya's poetry and creative nonfiction were recently published in the first issue of Carleton's *Sumac Literary Magazine*.

the Future is

Fresh bread and tomatoes and smiles at my girlfriend's hand in mine. I am no longer afraid of going outside or recognizing the back of someone's head. I implicit understanding and a freedom beyond labels.

Queer Queer Queer! Queerly moving through the world. Creating and imagining. Bringing visions to life. True rest. No longer being tied to productivity and punishment. No good alone. Art is valued. Humans make fun, silly things rather than unnecessary atrocities.



I found the monster

I hid

This is why I am the way I am.

It all turned out okay.

"I'm so incredibly sorry."



any kind of defiance.

A mouthful of anugula and feta. We're smiling and dancing and I don't care what people think of me.



Painting by Noah Gorrie

I wanted this piece to show what I'm working toward. The brightness coming through the windows and doors represents safety and optimism for the future, while the inside represents comfort and happiness as it's littered with things I love.

"I met a time-traveller who asked me..."

by maya chorney (on the right)

This poem was inspired by the utopian imaginings put forth by such people as José Esteban Muñoz in *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, Angela Jones in the introduction of *A Critical Inquiry into Queer Utopias*, and my collaborators during our one-on-one conversations. As an attempt to think through important concepts from my research, I read it aloud during the group workshops for the spiralling exercise.

“I met a time traveller who asked me...”

What if utopia is a refusal? A rejection, a critique of the here and now? What if utopia is to disavow oppression, injustices breathtaking and mundane? To disavow not in the sense of shrugging off accountability, but chains. Those you carry, those other people carry. Scratch that! What if utopia is a refusal to believe in false dichotomies, like self/Other? There is no chasm between us that can't be bridged if we try. Breathe in,

and out. (In and out.)

What if utopia is a turning away? A refusal to be indoctrinated into the churches of capitalism, colonialism, individualism? To place worth in these bodyminds beyond productivity, beyond labour? What if utopia is respect, the freedom to simply be? I'm not denying that your embodied knowledge is different from mine, is different from yours. We move through this world in unique ways, but what if our days weren't spent in a bubble of isolation? What if we burst that barrier? What if we could create utopia now, through community? Breathe in,

and out. (In and out.)

What if utopia is care? An interdependent network of true, ethical care and relation that goes deep as the old-growth forests that are burning to nothingness, more and more? What if utopia is green? Not the white of ash or ongoing colonization that oil companies—I mean countries—try to hide beneath nationalistic fervour? Breathe in,

and out. (In and out.)

What if utopia is bound to fail, not because it's an unattainable fantasy but because we commit ourselves so deeply to one another, our environments, that we're always reaching as one for a horizon that transforms as we do? What if utopia is a process, a work-in-progress, a dialogue that goes on and on? What if we take a deep breath in,

and out. (In and out.)

What if utopia is room to breathe?

“The Definition of Gender” by Alex Kluke

Purple soda, New york rat!
gentleman in a bowler hat!
swishy skirts, the entire night sky
it's a secret to myself, just a silly little guy



sanded down masculinity,
rough, and tough, pure energy
unknown object of a shifting shape & size,
plants grow in my veins, it's in my nature, a creature in a cage,
it feels like i drew something after closing my eyes



hands scraping against a pottery wheel going in reverse
climbing trees with manicured nails, playing in dirt
i'm blanket of yarn of many colours it's a mesh
filling in all the bubbles on a multiple choice test



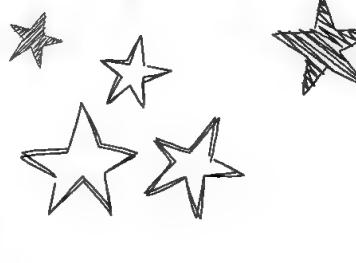
taste of sparkling water, green lava lamps
tv static, chai tea, a guitar amp
the calm of the ocean & the rage of its storm
my gender left to go get milk at the store



it's a pond in a forest, it's nothing at all
it's crashing your car into a wall
the shadow of a ghost, a broomstick hitting the floor
a knot in your throat, the flow of time
a twink, a sunset, a great big slime
descended from the stars into a bookstore



the sound that harsh winds make on buildings
the way that tree branches twitch
the fuzzy feeling of nostalgia,
half of a matrix glitch



A supervillain,
a scary lady,
an empty hole carved in my chest
like a rainbow that backs up
when you try to take a step



ripples in water against the sand
mirrors of the sunlight
it's a void in space
there is no up, down, left, or right,

yellow lights & dandelions
lighthouses & dapper lions
it's the feeling of pride in your pack
pretty sweet flowers, frail,
blossoms straying from its trail
mary poppins bag, the night sky's turning black



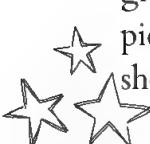
fooling with terminology like a sandbox, a plaything
it's the end of the world, it's gone in a hearse
It's a Russian doll with each layer it's very own gender
the vastness of the universe.



So purple sodas, and New york rats!
gentlemen in their bowler hats
swishy skirts, the entire night sky
it's a secret to myself, cuz i'm
just a silly little guy!



About the song: "i've always dreamed of finding the perfect words to explain what it's like to be transgender. But how can I give definition to a thing unique to every human being? This piece was put together from descriptions given by friends, to show a few of the infinite ways gender can be experienced."





Mx Drag Art by Linzi Redekop (Sardonyx)

These are the many outlines of makeup looks I have experimented with through my drag as Sardonyx, which has been an integral extension and exploration of my identity and expression as a nonbinary person. While there are masculine and feminine influences, I don't consider my drag to be gender conforming. It's an ever-changing art piece that, like me, has different fonts, styles and moods. In celebrating queerness, I think it's important that we recognize how far we've come but how far we still need to go. We need to flow toward change that benefits all of us, not just the privileged few. Liveable futures must include everyone. Through my drag, I've tried to plant seeds of community support and environmental action. We can't forget that the struggle for queer liberation, social justice and environmental justice are interconnected.

A

brief, wondrous life



i want the doors to

always be open without me. What's comin'
isn't a who will come through

Some media that influenced me during this project:

- *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* by José Esteban Muñoz
- *A Critical Inquiry into Queer Utopias* by Angela Jones (editor)
- *How to Make Art at the End of the World: A Manifesto for Research-Creation* by Natalie Loveless
- *Heartstopper* (yes, the tv show!)
- “Foraging the Future: Forest Baths, Engaged Pedagogy, and Planting Ourselves Into the Future” by Syrus Marcus Ware
- *The Future is Disabled: Prophecies, Love Notes, and Mourning Songs* by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha
- the art created by my friends for this project and beyond!
- beautifultrouble.org

- maya c.

“COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS BETWEEN CARLETON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ASSOCIATION INC AND ME!”

by Gabbie Cruz (*on the right*)

This spiral shit show takes from the not-yet-ratified collective agreement that serves as my “contract” with CUSA. I love my job and the people within it, but sometimes I feel stressed thinking about my place in the queer & trans community at Carleton and what I take from/give to it. It is hard to embody the future and hope and joy of being queer while dipping into the spiral of the many products of capitalism. I’m doing my best to (be) care(d) for (by) the community, but it’s messy and jagged at times.

“queer utopia”
by Gabbie Cruz (*centrefold*)

My queer utopia is made of nature and vibrancy; of shared bonds and community; and the space for art, love, & friendship. In the spaces not yet overgrown with leaves and flowers are colourful, hand drawn places I create for myself to fit in.

COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS

between

CARLETON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

ASSOCIATION INC.

and

3MEY

A member in good standing shall be an student in good standing.

and shall be a member of the bargaining unit.

Service Centres
Co-ordinators

S 16.1

Overtime shall be defined as any hours
worked beyond the normal

and everyone

shall be entitled to

Gender

Whenever the singular masculine or feminine is used in this
Agreement, it shall be considered as if the plural feminine or
masculine has been used where the context of the party or parties
here to is required

The bargaining unit

Employees shall not be laid off
during regular hours to equalize any

overtime

but they are cutting our hours

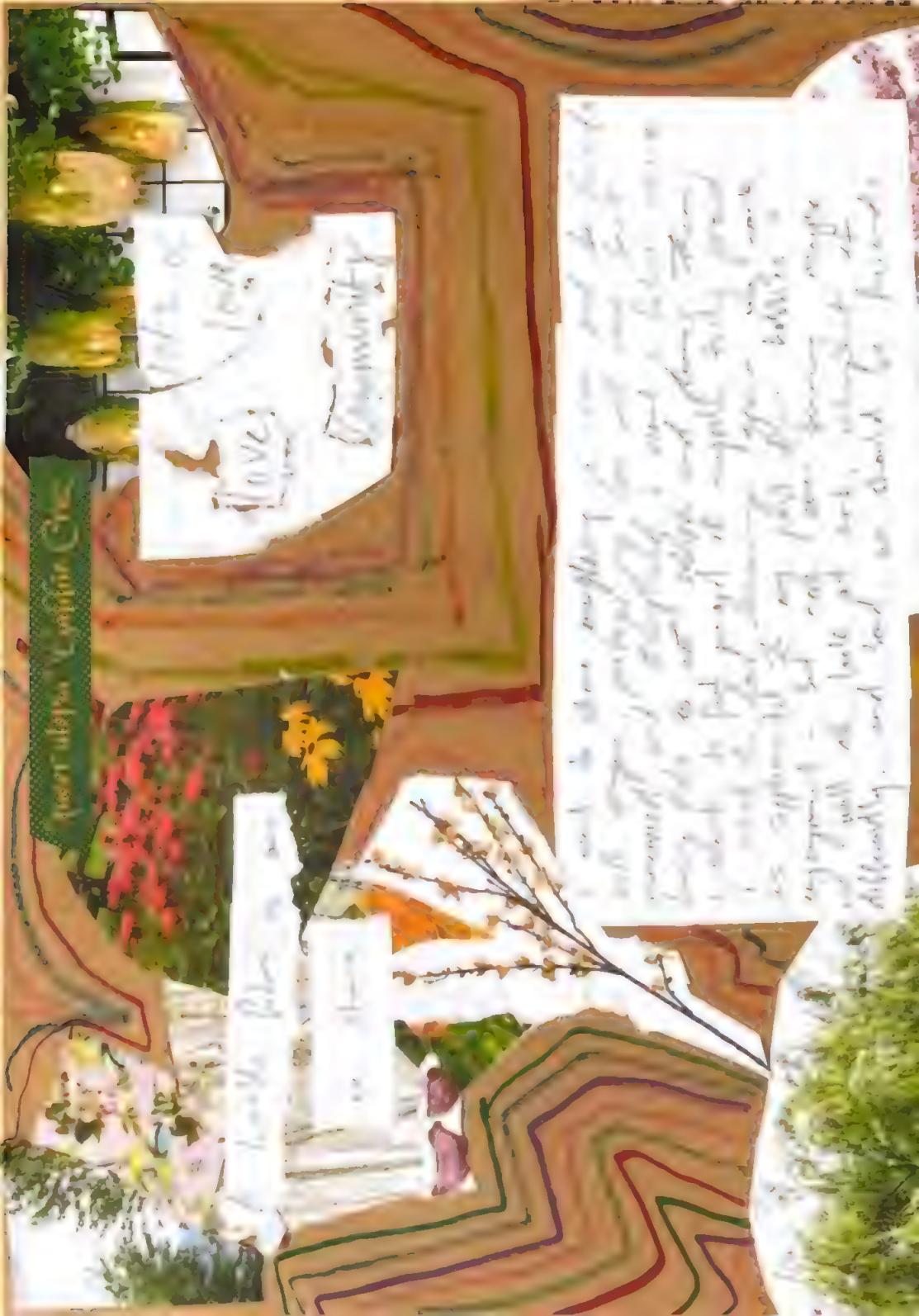
4.02 No Barrier to Affirmative Action

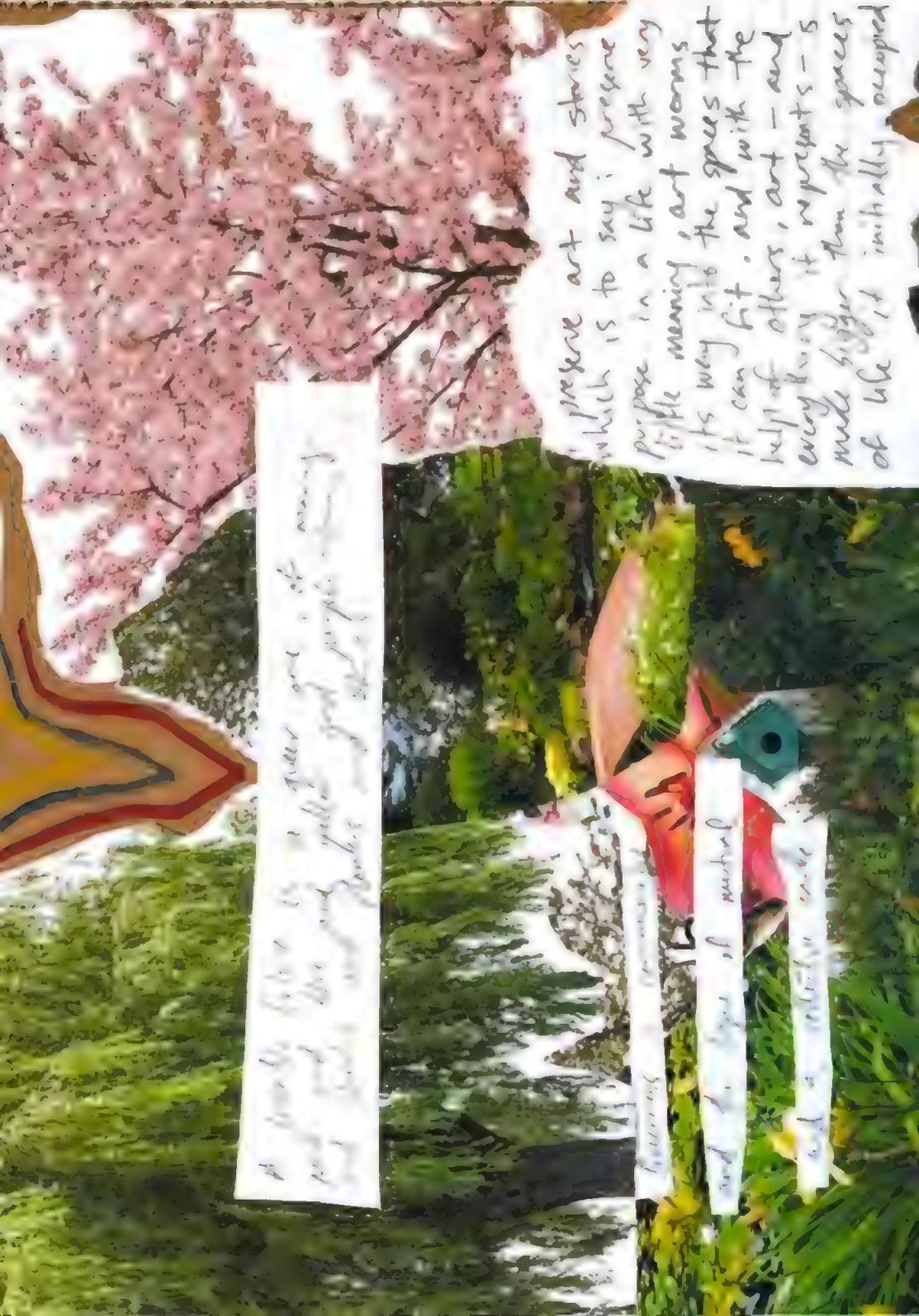
CUSA values employment and
educational equality and incomes
and opportunities for diverse groups including:
but not limited to: women
people with disabilities
aboriginal people, people of colour
and gay, lesbian, bisexual
and transgendered people

process

me profit if a

community is love





There are art and stores
which is to say: precon-
ceived in a life with very
little meaning that worms
its way into the spaces that
it can fit. and with the
help of others, art - and
everybody it represents - is
more bigger than the spaces
of life, it initially occupied



"Welcome Home" by Maya Charney

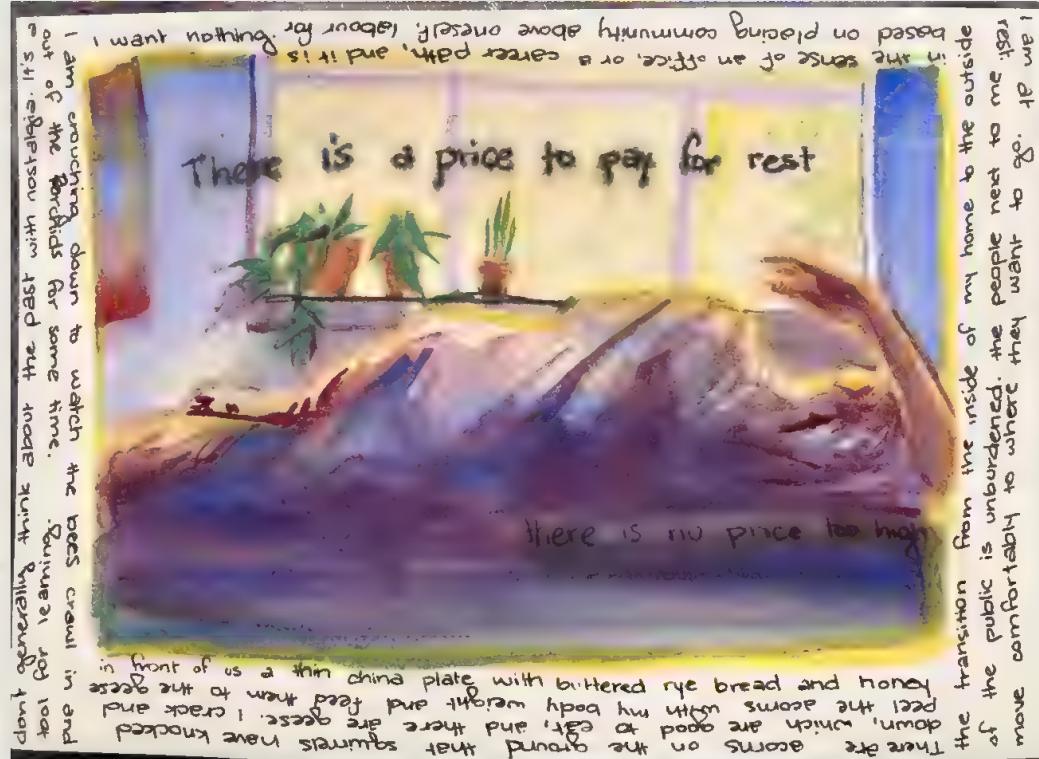
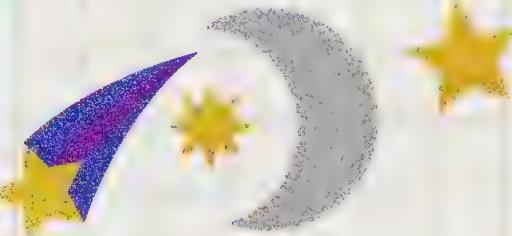
I made this collage on a scratched-up old record to prepare for the first art/social event I ever hosted. It's a visual rendering of what it means, for me, to have a sense of home that extends beyond a single physical space to include safety, comfort, music, art, nature, and the company of those I love and who love me.

“Now in Glorious Technicolor”
by Therese Bergmann (*on the left*)



The older work is a prescient queer utopia I painted from a vintage photo as a teenager in short 1 a.m. sittings so my family wouldn't see.

“Utopia” by Therese Bergmann (below) By those standards, the new one is already made in queer utopia.



SOME NOTES ON PRAXIS

“Room to Grow”

by Maya Chorney and Taylor Taniguchi

This was life in the City: I woke up in an apartment that violated at least two health and safety codes and got ready for work on the far side of town. I took three buses that arrived on time only if the commuting gods smiled down on me and swiped my entry card at the concrete monstrosity otherwise known as the *Department of Notices for the Office of Management of Wildlife Violations*. I'd go to my desk on the 28th floor and spend hours typing out notices for unruly shrubs, too-tall trees, and plants whose only offences were looking “weedy”. Then I would do it all in reverse, save for a quick stop to get food or visit the Florist.

I needed to touch grass, but thanks to my department there wasn't a square inch of green in the entire City. My landlord had told me there were three hiking trails in the area, all of which could be reached by sinking “only” an hour into public transit. But since I'd moved two had been closed for construction, and the other had become some creep's playground for attacking women (typical) so I was out of luck. So to compensate, I'd taken to adopting plants. Bureaucracy and predators be damned, my apartment was on its way to becoming its own green space.

One day at work, I looked out a window and saw nothing but a dusty red haze. An announcement cheerily informed us that the City was under a smoke advisory. The wind had carried over air pollution from a forest fire across the border. A scrawny kid being exploited as an unpaid intern, Merlin, rolled up beside me to look out the window. I gave them a nervous smile. They tried cracking a joke about it— calling upon some absurdist comedic statement about the end times. I laughed, but it didn't meet my eyes and Merlin noticed. They sighed, admitting that it wasn't really funny at all.

After work, I wrapped a scarf around my face and braved downtown to get a new Monsterra. To be honest, getting a new plant was a fringe benefit to seeing the Florist. I nervously stepped into the shop. All the plants made breathing easier, and so did the Florist's compliment on my tote bag. I returned her compliment by comparing the colour of her hair to a Zinnia. She laughed and told me I was a bit corny, but added that I was cute. I exited the store, blushing and nearly forgetting the Monsterra on the way out.

I was feeling pleased with myself as I made it to the bus stop. Back aching from the weight of the pot, I waited as a gray-haired driver pulled over. I knew him to be Howie, and he jovially asked if I needed a ride. As always, strange music played from the speakers. I trundled up the stairs and sat down. Having heard the same otherworldly playlists on this bus for the past few months, I finally gave in and asked Howie what on earth we were listening to. He chuckled and told me it was the language of plants.

The week after, I couldn't sleep. I hopped on Howie's bus around 2 a.m., the sole passenger. He had me close a window, grumbling about his bad lungs and the air quality. Forcing it shut, I said it was impossible to breathe well in the City. I told him about my childhood home, how my grandmother always asked me to garden with her since plants seemed to grow unusually well in my presence. He confided that he also had a gift. He understood the plant music not just as sound, but as thoughts and emotions.

I spent the next while in a similar routine: wake up, joke with Merlin at work, flirt with the Florist, add more plants to my apartment, have late-night confessionals with Howie, sleep. Something was still missing, though. And whatever it was, the need for it grew within me like a vine.

I sat alone in my apartment, sprawled on the couch while staring at my plants, grazing their leaves with my finger and filling their pots with water. It was a small garden, lovely and lonely. A spot of nature to occupy me until I found a way out of this place. I knew that I was making preparations, but for what, exactly, I was unsure. And then the answer came with three knocks at my door, one after the other.

The Florist arrived first, bearing a single Zinnia in a miniature vase from her shop. I brought the plant into my bedroom, placed it on my dresser, and observed the Florist as she looked around. I watched her touch my things and read the labels on my acne cream and deodorant. For some reason, it was hot.

Howie came next and offered to share his gift of music. He took my hands and showed me how he could hear the plants sing. I closed my eyes and listened with him, and suddenly I could hear them humming and snapping with energy all around us.

Merlin came last. They brought me a Spider Plant in a pot decorated with bright acrylic paint and stick-on jewels. They had made the pot just for me but took the plant from their mother's house. I asked if she was okay with that. Running a hand through their green mullet, they waved vaguely, assuring me all was well.

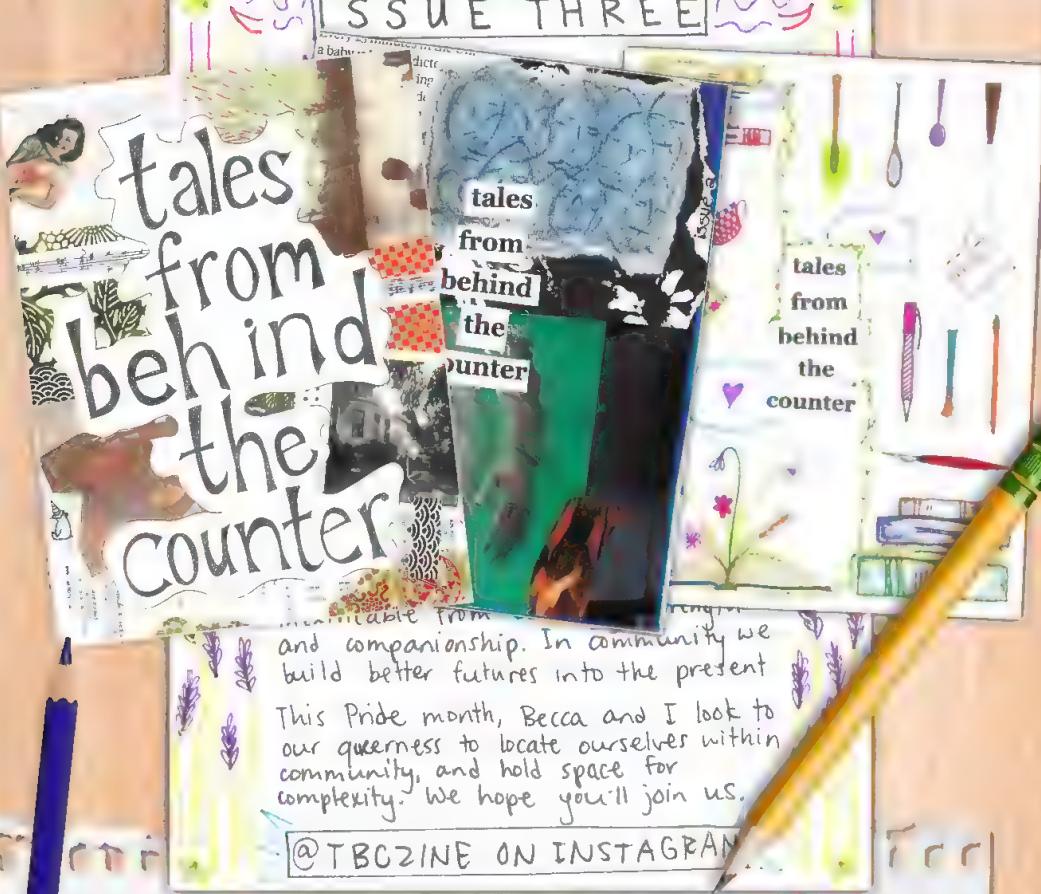
Before I could question them further, my apartment began to shake. Eyes locking with Merlin, my immediate thought was that the apocalypse had finally come to take us all into a whole other level of hellscape. But then I saw how the floral wallpaper began to shift and move until the vines burst out of the paper and began to wrap themselves around a wooden banister. I felt the mouldy carpet begin to sprout moss and mushrooms that shot up between my toes and caressed my ankles.

The gifts I had received were growing taller and wider, scraping the popcorn ceiling until there was no ceiling left at all. The leaky pipe under my kitchen sink burst and water rushed to fill a new groove of dirt on the floor. My apartment opened up to be impossibly wide until it simply stopped being an apartment. My world became a forest. I could see the blue sky above me as birds darted between the trees, and the rolling green hills stretched across the horizon until we were all enveloped in its expanse.

The music from the plants that Howie and I could hear grew louder, morphing from an acapella to a philharmonic orchestra. Howie closed his eyes and took a deep breath, feeling the music engulf us. Merlin stroked the rough bark on a nearby tree before crouching down and dipping their hands in the river. I watched the Florist smile as she knelt to feel the grass beneath us. She looked up at me with her large, dark eyes. I smiled back at her and felt the air, now filled with music, finally come easily to me.

About “Room to Grow”

We collaboratively wrote this story while video-calling with each other. Starting with an exchange of ideas and anecdotes, we opened a shared document and began jotting down the vibes we sought. We took a stream-of-consciousness approach, writing simultaneously and fitting the story together like a puzzle as we spoke. We jumped around the document, offering feedback to one another and editing earlier sections to integrate new elements as they were introduced. Our inspirations include nature, childhood fables, the strangeness of dreams, and the people in our lives. The result is a fable about modern anxieties—and a utopic solution found in joining interdependent community networks that reach across generations and species, thus creating room to breathe and grow.



About *Tales from Behind the Counter*: Artist Statement

Co-created by Becca Yates and Kiran Niet, *Tales From Behind the Counter* (TBC for short) is a zine dedicated to building solidarity and community in Ottawa. The zine's title references Becca and Kiran's shared experience as café baristas, where we've witnessed all kinds of community from behind the counter. TBC includes interviews with community members, writing, poetry, and visual art created by Becca and Kiran as well as donated by collaborators and friends. We believe that creativity and joy are at the heart of social change, so each issue is sold by donation, with all proceeds going to a community organization in line with the issue's themes. Stayed tuned for Issue 4, coming December 2023.



...trying to uproot us ... will only make us ...

~~A~~ **STAND LOUDER** ~~STAND~~

Untitled Illustration by Julia Graham

I'd like to give a special thanks to my friends—past, present, and future—who have embraced and supported me through my ever-evolving journey and identity as a queer person. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, I love you all dearly 

13 Artists Answer: What is a desirable future?

I want to live in a world that centres itself around care. I want to live in a world where the collective is more important than the individual. I think individualism is just poisonous. If you're in a position where you're able to help others, I think you should. It doesn't have to be a huge sacrifice, you can help in small ways. That can be different for everyone. It can be helping at the local food bank or making these accessible art events because everyone deserves to create. It doesn't matter what your background or financial position is—if you can help in that way, that's amazing.

...

My personal and socio-political paths are closely intertwined. I would love to be a representative fighting for LGBT rights, have conversations like this, to sit down and talk to people because it's something I've found myself to be pretty good at. I enjoy having one-on-one conversations to understand the other person's point of view. I want to work to create change around the world.

...

I feel like politically, things are regressing in a way that's really scary. We're all affected by the way things are shaking out. In terms of politics and the queer community, our most vulnerable members are being so deeply affected right now with anti-trans policies. I'd like everyone to not have to worry about stuff like that, to have a future in which you can just exist and not worry that who you are fundamentally as a person causes you issues.

...

A big thing for me, especially living in the suburbs, is wanting to move somewhere walkable. I want a tighter-knit community not separated by cars and highways. I think that this would bring people together. And a utopian world wouldn't just be walkable, it'd be accessible. I don't want stairs everywhere. I think distance has created a lot of issues and if people could talk to each other face-to-face it would really help ease some tension and conflict.

...

I love community, and I love sharing, but my utopia is not being questioned. I don't want anyone up in my business like, ever. [Laughs.] A co-worker was too scared to ask for my pronouns so he asked my friend. If what it takes is for straight people to be intimidated—it sounds bad, and I wish that wasn't the case, but—I'll take it. It's how I sustain my bubble of utopia. When I come out of a queer space, my expectations are on the ground. I have the "do not question me" bubble. If they don't talk, I can sustain the illusion that everyone's fine with everything. In the world we have, an element of delusion is necessary to get us through. But it can also create the world we want because a straight white man is asking for my pronouns! I think utopia is providing relief from the top down in an ethical and conscious way.

...

For me, a more ideal reality would be one in which I have time to work on art and my ability to take a break is considered vital to my ability to work. Sometimes there is a struggle to get the motivation to do anything exceptional. I think what we need for that is a bit of hope, a promise our efforts will be rewarded in some way. I don't mean by money, I mean by some signifier of progress. As long as you keep looking up and keep everything open, it's going to be better. Being in environments where I don't have to put on a façade or bend myself to fit in is also ideal.

...

I have a million hopes and dreams but really I just want basic respect and the feeling that it's not a privilege. I've recently been accepting that I'm allowed to tell people what my pronouns are even when I'm presenting in a way where I don't pass. It's not something I need to earn. With homophobia and transphobia, people think they have the authority to disrespect our human rights. There's this idea that trans people are just faking it. I can hide my queerness—but in a desirable future, I wouldn't have to. And there'd be so many more resources.

...

I want a future where we share a lot more, whether we share stories or exchange resources...not the little commie coming out of me! [Laughs.] But I think a future where we're willing to share and listen to each other is my ideal. I like the idea of a very "help your neighbour" philosophy, whether that be through something tangible or someone's company, someone's stories. I like the idea of a place where we can always just share things.

...

To me, a liveable future is one where everyone has equitable community care and support on all levels, clean air, clean drinking water, and adequate shelter. I would see Land Back and actual power restoration. I wouldn't see queer people being afraid, harassed, or abused. Rivers and forests would have the right to a liveable future free of toxic waste. We need to scale back on a lot of things. Progress is really only progress for those who can afford it. The big oil and gas companies can afford to break the law. We need accountability. I also want everyone to get paid appropriately for their time, energy, and efforts.

...

The first thing that comes to mind is consulting Indigenous communities who have actually lived in the land for centuries before we colonized it and created this fucking hellscape of capitalism and colonialism. That would be my first instinct.

...

A desirable future is one in which queer and trans people can just live our lives. There are so many obstructions on a socio-political level right now, especially for trans people. I want people to be able to live and create and express their ideas because somebody else can see it, know they aren't alone, and reach out. Seeing my friends create and perform has really helped me expand my queer identity. Learning more about what goes into my friend's drag has helped me come to terms with my gender identity as a nonbinary person. Talking with queer creative people helped me realize that when I do experience attraction it's universal, or pan.

[Continued] I wouldn't have gotten those perspectives if I hadn't reached out to all those people. I've then had people reach out to me to talk about how they might fall under these umbrellas. We've been able to grow collectively as a result. As someone who is aro/ace, I'd also like greater awareness about different forms of relationships, love, intimacy, and care. I feel this is something the queer community has really tapped into.

•••

I have an elaborate fantasy where I live in the woods about 30 minutes from the city. I live off of writing and that's all I do. I've also taken up wood carving, for some reason. [Laughs.] But I mostly just write from my shack and send it out on the internet and I never have to leave. I want to be myself in a quiet, peaceful area. Not completely alone, because I can go to the city to be with everyone. I don't have to worry about money. I'm mostly self-sustaining 'cause I grow my own food. I think for everyone to collectively achieve their desired futures we need to reach out to each other more and have a strong sense of community. Not just in a social sense but in genuinely helping each other. There are a lot of queer people out there who are homeless, can't eat, don't have jobs, and are struggling. I feel like this is a big city, we can get lost in here. We need community, to help each other.

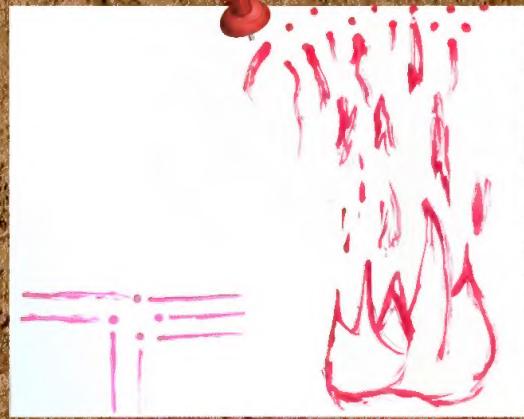
•••

I want to be in queer community. I don't really want to be in spaces that don't have room for queerness, ever, actually. I want to be living a life that is building the future I think we need, a life that projects queer utopia into the future in whatever way I can, with radical community and care. I feel like I'm so far from that point, but I want to learn and figure out what that means for me. I think for the future on a humanity level, I want the same thing. I want that for everybody. And it's so complicated, there are so many things to think about, but at the end of the day, it's just that. I want care—care and community for everybody.

[Answers have been edited for concision and clarity.]

If you gain anything from this zine, I hope it's a willingness to go beyond theory and support utopian initiatives however you can. Share resources. Join protests. Engage in conversation. Advocate for radical accessibility, respect, and community care. Dream of better futures. Co-create spaces where we can all play, explore, and breathe. Make art!

- maya c.



Painting by Cat McDonald

I wanted to project my experience of being unable to fully be myself for fear of judgement onto fish as I am an animal lover and believe they can feel just as deeply as you and me.

Untitled by Julia Graham



“Taking Time” by Kathleen Maguire



If nobody else,



If nothing else,



We have Time



about the project

what are queer people dreaming of? how do we engage with identity, art, & community? how can we mobilize our creative practices in the pursuit of radical worldbuilding? what futures & utopic spaces can we co-create today through art & community?

these are some of the questions I've been asking myself & my collaborators over the past few months. this zine documents my experiment of putting queer theory into praxis. it is not properly a manifesto, a project analysis, a journal, an interview transcript, a guide, or an art book. it is instead a bit of each of these, & something else entirely. it is a collection of dreams, desires, & imaginings for a better & queerer future. it is an exercise in creating pockets of utopia now, if only fleetingly, and a call to keep doing so.



featuring art & ideas by...



Therese Bergmann, Maya Chorney, Gabbie Cruz, Noah Gorrie, Julia Graham, Alex Kluke, Kathleen Maguire, Grace McClintock-Luft, Cat McDonald, Maya Meloche, Kiran Niet, Dani Pybus, Linzi Redekop (Sardonyx), & Taylor Taniguchi